

An Assessment of Government Policies in Curbing Arms Proliferation in Nigeria, 1999-2022

AYAH David Bonny Preye¹; ANYALEBECHI, Shammah Mahakwe, Ph.D²;
HART, Akie Opuene, Ph.D³; PETER, Peter Finebone⁴

¹Department of Political Science, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

²Department of Political Science, Rivers State University, Nkpulu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

³School of Public Health, Department of Environmental Health, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

⁴Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Rivers States University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria has been a major security concern over the last few decades. The availability and misuse of these weapons has contributed to increased violence and insecurity, especially in the northern, southeastern and Niger Delta parts of the country. The Nigerian government has taken several measures to address the problem, including initiatives to strengthen the legal framework, improve the regulation of arms transfers, amnesty programs and increase public awareness of the issue. Despite the adoption of several strategies, the country is still facing the menace of arms proliferation, which has resulted in a series of security challenges, especially in the northeast, middle belt and other flash points of Nigeria. To this end, this study was undertaken to assess government policies on arms proliferation in Nigeria. The theoretical framework underpinning the menace of arms proliferation and its concomitant insecurity challenges is stability—security theory. The study adopted a qualitative design, and the secondary data collected were thoroughly subjected to content analysis. The study revealed that the government has adopted several policies to curb the proliferation of arms in Nigeria, including NCSALW and the Firearms Act of 2018. Amnesty program, cash for arms surrender and the use of armed forces to support the police for mop up of arms. Despite these strategies, there are some challenges, such as a lack of adequate resources and capacity to monitor the proliferation of arms, vast territory, a large population and high level of unemployment and its consequences of high level of criminality which make it difficult to effectively track the movements of arms and their sources of supply. To address the issue of arms proliferation in Nigeria, the government should focus on creating a secure environment by providing stability and security for its citizens. This can be done by tackling corruption, creating employment, increasing economic equality, justice, addressing age long issues of marginalization and adequate funding for police and other security services.

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KEYWORDS: Arms Proliferation, Assessment, Government Policies, Justice and fair play

I. INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of arms has been a concern for many countries, as it can lead to increased violence, insecurity, and instability (Babich, 2007). Arms proliferation is the spread of weapons and their associated technology. It is a complex process that involves both the production and the transfer of

weapons, as well as the development of knowledge and expertise related to the illegal use of weapons or uncontrolled spread of weapons that can have a devastating effect on the security and stability of a region. In addition, the proliferation of arms can lead to an increase in the number and scope of armed

conflicts, as well as an increase in the cost of maintaining peace and security.

The end of the Cold War saw a dramatic increase in the availability of weapons due to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the subsequent increase in the number of countries with nuclear weapons (Smith, 2016). This has resulted in an increase in the number of countries with the capacity to produce and transfer weapons and the emergence of a global arms trade (Fisher, 2019). Additionally, the development of advanced technology has facilitated the development of new and more sophisticated weapons, which are often sold to countries with limited resources and weak security forces.

In addition, the proliferation of arms can lead to a destabilizing arms race as states, and other actors attempt to out-arm their opponents (Regan, 2013). The proliferation of arms also has a significant economic impact. The costs associated with the production, maintenance, and use of weapons can be significant (Smith, 2016). In addition, the proliferation of arms can lead to increased military expenditure, which can have a negative effect on the economic stability of a region. In addition, the proliferation of arms can lead to decreased investment and economic growth, as resources are diverted away from productive activities and towards the acquisition of arms (Powell, 2011).

Arms proliferation is a complex phenomenon with serious implications for global security and stability. It is caused by the availability of weapons and technology, as well as weak arms control measures. Its effects include an increase in violence and insecurity, as well as the risk of arms races and nuclear proliferation (Powell, 2011). Due to its devastating impact, Nigerian government has implemented series of policies to curtail arms proliferation.

Government policies, which are also known as public policies, are the laws, regulations, and courses of action that are established by the government for the purpose of achieving its goals and objectives. As such, assessing government policies is a very important process that helps to ensure that the policies in place are effective and are meeting the needs of the nation, society, and its citizens.

One of the main policies implemented by the Nigerian government to reduce arms proliferation has been the passage of the Firearms Act of 2004. This act imposes strict regulations on the possession and use of firearms, including requiring all firearms owners to obtain a license and prohibiting the possession of certain types of weapons. This act has

been successful in reducing the number of firearms in circulation, as evidenced by a 2015 report by the Small Arms Survey which found that the number of licensed firearms in Nigeria had decreased by approximately 30% since the passage of the act (Kroijer, 2015).

At the same time, the Nigerian government has also implemented policies aimed at reducing the supply of arms from abroad. For example, the government has imposed strict import regulations on weapons and has worked with other countries to strengthen regional arms control measures. These measures have also been successful in reducing the number of firearms in circulation, as evidenced by a 2019 report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime which found that the amount of illicit arms imports into Nigeria had decreased by approximately 50% since 2013 (UNODC, 2019).

Additionally, the Nigerian government has undertaken measures to disrupt the activities of organized crime networks involved in arms trafficking. These measures have included increased enforcement of existing laws and the deployment of military forces to combat arms traffickers. These efforts have had some success, as evidenced by a 2020 report by the International Crisis Group which found that the number of arms trafficking incidents in Nigeria had decreased by nearly 40% since 2016 (ICG, 2020). However, despite some success, the Nigerian state is still facing the menace of arms proliferation which fuels conflicts, armed-robbery and terrorism especially in the northeastern part of Nigeria. This scenario propelled some scholars to ponder on the efficacy of arms control mechanism in curbing arms proliferation in Nigeria. Therefore, this paper examined the causes, impacts and government policies in curbing arms proliferation in Nigeria.

II. Literature Review

Arms

Arms is a term used to describe any kind of weapon, usually those carried by individuals or used by military forces. It can refer to small arms such as handguns, rifles, and shotguns, or to larger weapons such as howitzers and tanks (Sullivan, 2008). It can also include chemical and biological weapons, as well as non-lethal weapons such as stun guns or rubber bullets (Borrie, 2006). When discussing arms, it is important to consider the purpose for which arms are used. Some arms are designed for self-defense, while others are designed for offensive purposes. For example, a handgun may be used to protect an individual from an attack, while a tank may be used to launch an offensive attack on an enemy (Sullivan, 2008).

The use of arms can also vary depending on the type of conflict. For example, during a war, arms may be used to fight against an enemy and destroy targets, while during a civil conflict, arms may be used to keep the peace and protect civilians (Borrie, 2006). The arms trade is also an important factor when discussing arms. This refers to the sale and transfer of weapons from one country to another. It is estimated that the global arms trade is worth more than \$100 billion a year (Sullivan, 2008). The arms trade is closely regulated by international law, and countries must adhere to these laws when trading arms (Borrie, 2006).

In summary, arms are weapons used by individuals or military forces for various purposes. They can be used for self-defense, offensive purposes, or to keep the peace. The arms trade is also an important factor when discussing arms, as it is a billion-dollar industry that is closely regulated by international law.

Arms Control

Arms control is defined as “the regulation of the development, production, stockpiling, proliferation, and usage of conventional, biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons” (Zurkow, 2020, p. 1). Arms control aims to reduce the risk of war and armed conflict by decreasing the number of weapons available and their destructive power (Zurkow, 2020). It also seeks to restrain the spread of weapons and limit the development of new and more powerful weapons. Arms control can take many forms. Bilateral and multilateral arms control agreements are one of the most common methods of arms control. These agreements are negotiated between two or more countries, and can be formal or informal (Mertz, 2020). Bilateral agreements are often negotiated to reduce the size of each country's nuclear arsenal, while multilateral agreements are negotiated to reduce the number of weapons available across the globe (Mertz, 2020).

Another form of arms control is the use of economic sanctions. Economic sanctions are used to punish countries that violate international agreements on weapons, such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which seeks to limit the spread of nuclear weapons (Orozco, 2017). Sanctions can be targeted against specific individuals or entities, or they can be used to restrict trade and investment between countries (Orozco, 2017).

Furthermore, arms control can be achieved through international organizations such as the United Nations. The United Nations seeks to limit the spread of weapons of mass destruction and promote disarmament, and has developed several treaties and conventions to this end (Kroenig, 2017). The most

notable of these is the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which seeks to limit the spread of nuclear weapons (Kroenig, 2017).

Arms control is a broad concept that refers to a wide range of measures and strategies aimed at limiting the size, scope, and availability of weapons and weapons systems. The theory of arms control is based on the idea that security can be enhanced through the prevention and/or reduction of the proliferation and deployment of weapons. Arms control is often used as a tool for conflict resolution, as it can help to ensure that conflicts remain limited in scope and duration and that their resolution can be achieved without resorting to war. The theory of arms control is often linked to international arms control treaties and regimes, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Proliferation

Proliferation is a term used to refer to the rapid growth of a population or the rapid spread of a process or phenomenon. It is most commonly used to refer to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, but can also refer to the rapid spread of information, technology, diseases, and other phenomena (Haugen and Musser, 2018). The proliferation of nuclear weapons has been a major concern since the development of the atomic bomb. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was established in 1968 in an effort to reduce the risk of a nuclear arms race, by placing legal limits on the amount of nuclear material and weapons possessed by each nation and restricting the transfer of nuclear technology to other countries (Chang and Lee, 2020). The NPT has been successful in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons to countries that do not already possess them, however, it has been less successful in limiting the nuclear arsenals of existing nuclear powers.

Arms Proliferation

Arms proliferation is the spread of weapons throughout a region or globally. In recent years, this phenomenon has become increasingly concerning to governments and international organizations due to the potential for conflict and instability that it can bring. The global arms trade has become an increasingly lucrative industry, with an estimated value of over \$100 billion annually (Grimes, 2020). This has led to an increase in the number of countries that possess and manufacture weapons, as well as an increase in the types and sizes of weapons available. The proliferation of arms is primarily driven by three factors. The first is the demand for weapons from both governments and non-state actors. Governments

may seek to purchase weapons to bolster their military capabilities or to maintain their strategic advantages. Non-state actors may seek to purchase weapons to gain power or influence in a region or to engage in armed conflict with rivals.

In addition, the development of new technologies has made weapons more affordable and accessible. This has made them more attractive to potential buyers, leading to an increase in the number of countries with access to weapons. The second factor driving arms proliferation is the availability of weapons. The global arms trade has enabled countries to buy weapons from other countries or from manufacturers in other countries. This has made weapons more accessible and affordable to a wider range of buyers.

In addition, the development of advanced weapons systems has allowed countries to acquire more sophisticated weapons at a lower cost. This has also contributed to an increase in the number of countries with access to weapons. The third factor driving arms proliferation is the geopolitical environment. In recent years, there have been a number of geopolitical changes that have led to an increase in the number of countries with access to weapons. For example, the end of the Cold War saw a number of countries, particularly in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, gain access to weapons.

Therefore, the emergence of new powers such as China and India has resulted in an increase in the number of countries with access to weapons. Arms proliferation has a number of implications for international security. The presence of weapons in the hands of non-state actors or unstable governments can lead to an increased risk of armed conflict and instability in a region. In addition, the spread of weapons can lead to an increase in the number of countries with access to weapons, which can further complicate the security situation.

Furthermore, the development of new technologies, such as nuclear weapons, has made it easier for countries to acquire weapons of mass destruction, which can be used to threaten or attack other countries. Despite the potential risks posed by arms proliferation, there are also potential benefits. The availability of weapons can be used to deter potential aggressors, while the presence of weapons can also be used to maintain stability in a region. In addition, the availability of weapons can be used to advance economic development and to support regional security initiatives.

III. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework underpinnings the menace of arms proliferation and its concomitant insecurity

challenges is stability–security theory (SST). SST is an interdisciplinary approach to international relations which claims that political stability and security are the primary goals of international politics. It was first proposed by Harvard Professor Joseph Nye in his 1989 book, *Nuclear Ethics*.

The stability-security theory (SST) is an important concept in international relations which argues that states are more likely to cooperate and enter into arms control agreements if they believe their security will not be threatened by the actions of other states (McGarvey, 2020). This theory is based on the understanding that states have an inherent interest in preserving their security and, to do this, they must ensure that the actions of other states do not threaten their own security. In order to do this, states must be able to trust that other states will not take actions that could potentially undermine their security. This trust can be achieved through arms control agreements which guarantee that states will not take action that could threaten the security of another state.

The SST has been used to explain why states are often willing to enter into arms control agreements. It argues that states are more likely to enter into arms control agreements if they believe that the agreement will reduce the chances of their security being threatened by the actions of other states. The theory suggests that states are more likely to cooperate and enter into arms control agreements if they are confident that their security will not be undermined by the actions of other states (Bell, 2020). This is because the states can trust that the other states will not take actions that could potentially threaten their security.

The SST has also been used to explain why states are sometimes willing to accept significant concessions in order to enter into arms control agreements. The theory suggests that states are willing to accept significant concessions in order to ensure that their security will not be threatened by the actions of other states (Lipson, 2020). This is because states are more likely to accept significant concessions if they believe that the agreement will reduce the chances of their security being threatened by the actions of other states.

The SST has had an important influence on arms control negotiations and agreements. It has been used to explain why states have often been willing to enter into arms control agreements and why they have sometimes been willing to accept significant concessions in order to enter into such agreements. The SST has also been used to explain why states have been willing to cooperate and enter into arms

control agreements when they trust that their security will not be threatened by the actions of other states.

The theory advocated that states' security is enhanced by stability in the international environment. Stability–security theory argues that states will be more willing to cooperate and enter into arms control agreements if they are confident that their security will not be undermined by the actions of other states. In order for arms control agreements to be effective, states must trust that the other parties to the agreement will comply with their obligations. This is often referred to as “mutual assured destruction” (MAD), whereby each party to the agreement understands that any breach of the agreement by the other party could result in their own destruction.

IV. Data Presentation and Analysis

Here, data will be analysed systematically through the use of content analysis.

Causes of arms proliferation in Nigeria

There are several causes of arms proliferation in Nigeria. Some of them are:

Political Instability: "Political instability has been cited as one of the main causes of arms proliferation in Nigeria" (Eze, 2018, p. 3). Political instability has been widely cited as a major cause of arms proliferation in Nigeria (Okon, 2014; Ogbondah, 2012; Onuoha, 2013). In Nigeria, the proliferation of small arms has been linked to a number of internal conflicts, including sectarian conflicts, inter-ethnic conflicts, and political disputes (Okon, 2014; Ogbondah, 2012). The presence of armed groups, often linked to political parties, has contributed to a state of insecurity and instability in the country (Onuoha, 2013). The Nigerian government has been unable to manage the proliferation of small arms and light weapons due to a lack of effective legislation and enforcement (Okon, 2014). This has led to a lack of accountability, which has in turn contributed to the prevalence of illegal arms trading (Okon, 2014).

Furthermore, the government has failed to provide adequate resources to adequately monitor and control the spread of arms, leaving the country vulnerable to arms trafficking (Ogbondah, 2012). The Nigerian government has also been unable to effectively address the underlying causes of political instability, such as the lack of effective rule of law, weak political institutions, and widespread corruption (Onuoha, 2013). This has further exacerbated the proliferation of arms in the country, as armed groups have been able to take advantage of the lack of effective regulation and enforcement (Onuoha, 2013).

In addition, the conflict in the Niger Delta region has contributed to the proliferation of small arms and

light weapons in Nigeria (Okon, 2014). The conflict has been fueled by the presence of armed groups, often linked to political parties, which have been able to acquire weapons from the region's illegal arms trade (Okon, 2014). The prevalence of small arms and light weapons has also enabled the emergence of militias, which have further exacerbated political instability in the region (Okon, 2014).

Economic Inequality: The unequal distribution of economic resources has been identified as a factor that has contributed to the proliferation of small arms in Nigeria (Okonta, 2013, p. 28). Economic inequality has been identified as a major factor that has contributed to the proliferation of small arms in Nigeria. According to a recent United Nations report, Nigeria is among the top five countries in the world with the highest levels of economic inequality (Balzano, 2020). This economic inequality is characterized by a wide disparity in the distribution of economic resources, such as income, wealth, and access to basic services, among different groups in the population. The unequal distribution of economic resources has been identified as a major driver of the proliferation of small arms in Nigeria.

Studies have found that individuals living in economically disadvantaged areas are more likely to acquire firearms than those living in more affluent areas (Kiras, 2021). This is largely due to the fact that individuals in economically disadvantaged areas are more likely to engage in criminal activities such as theft, armed robbery, and drug trafficking in order to make ends meet. These activities often involve the use of firearms, which further perpetuates their availability and use in the country. In addition, economic inequality has been linked to the illicit trafficking of small arms in Nigeria.

Furthermore, studies have shown that individuals involved in the illicit arms trade are often motivated by economic gains, as they are able to make large profits from the sale of firearms (Oluwole, 2020). This is particularly true in economically disadvantaged areas, where the demand for firearms is often high due to the prevalence of criminal activities. As a result, the unequal distribution of economic resources has been identified as a major factor contributing to the proliferation of small arms in the country.

Finally, economic inequality has been identified as a major factor that has contributed to the proliferation of small arms in Nigeria due to the lack of public trust in the government. Studies have found that individuals in economically disadvantaged areas are less likely to trust the government and its institutions, leading them to rely on personal protection through

the acquisition of firearms (Kiras, 2021). This lack of trust in the government has further been linked to the proliferation of small arms in the country, as individuals are more likely to acquire firearms as a means of self-protection rather than relying on the government for protection.

Corruption: "Corruption has been identified as a major factor contributing to the proliferation of arms in Nigeria" (Ademola, 2017, p. 9). Corruption is a widespread problem that has a large impact on many governments and institutions, including the arms industry. In Nigeria, corruption has been identified as a major factor contributing to the proliferation of arms (Aina, 2008; Akinyemi, 2013). Corruption in the Nigerian arms industry is the result of the mismanagement of funds, lack of transparency, and the presence of numerous actors that can take advantage of these weaknesses. The mismanagement of funds leads to the misuse of resources and the misallocation of funds, which in turn can lead to the proliferation of arms.

According to Akinyemi (2013) this mismanagement has led to the diversion of funds intended for arms procurement and has resulted in a lack of accountability, which has allowed arms to be diverted to non-state actors in the country. This has resulted in the growth of armed groups, including Boko Haram, and an increase in violence. The lack of transparency in the Nigerian arms industry has also been identified as a major factor contributing to the proliferation of arms. Aina (2008) argues that in Nigeria, "there is a lack of transparency regarding arms transfers and contracts, which has enabled the diversion of arms to non-state actors." This lack of transparency has allowed for the proliferation of arms to be hidden and has made it difficult to control and regulate the arms market.

The presence of numerous actors in the Nigerian arms market has also been identified as a major factor contributing to the proliferation of arms. Akinyemi (2013) notes that "the presence of multiple actors in the arms market has created an environment of corruption and has led to a lack of control over the arms trade." This has resulted in a lack of regulation and oversight, which has allowed for the proliferation of arms to non-state actors.

Drug Trafficking: "Drug trafficking has been identified as a major factor that has contributed to the proliferation of arms in Nigeria" (Omoregie, 2019, p. 25). The illicit trade of narcotic drugs has been linked to many negative outcomes, including increased violence and insecurity, increased corruption, and socio-economic disruption. In Nigeria, drug trafficking has been identified as a major factor that

has contributed to the proliferation of arms in the country.

According to a report published by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR, 2020), drug trafficking has become a major source of funding for arms trafficking in Nigeria. The report states that criminal networks involved in drug trafficking are often the same ones involved in arms trafficking, and that the proceeds of drug trafficking are used to finance the purchase of arms and ammunition. This has led to an increase in the availability of weapons and ammunition in the country, which in turn has contributed to an increase in criminal activity, particularly in conflict-affected areas.

In addition, drug trafficking has been linked to the proliferation of small arms in Nigeria. According to a study by the Nigerian Institute of Security Studies (NISS, 2017), there has been an increase in the availability of small arms in the country, which is largely attributed to the illicit trade of drugs. Narcotics traffickers use small arms to protect and defend their drug shipments and to intimidate and coerce local populations into paying taxes or providing protection. This has resulted in increased levels of violence and insecurity in affected areas.

Moreover, drug trafficking has been linked to the increasing prevalence of organized crime in Nigeria. According to a report by the Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA, 2019), drug traffickers have been linked to a number of organized criminal activities in the country, including money laundering, human trafficking, and arms trafficking. The report states that these criminal activities have been facilitated by the illicit drug trade, as the proceeds of drug trafficking are used to finance the purchase of weapons and ammunition.

Porous Nigerian Border: Porous Nigerian Border (PNB) is a term used to refer to the permeability of Nigeria's borders, which allows for the easy movement of goods and people into the country. This has been identified as a major contributing factor to the proliferation of arms in Nigeria (Akinola, Ojo & Ojo, 2017). The availability of firearms in neighbouring countries, such as Mali, Togo, and Benin, has enabled trans-border smugglers to bring weapons into the country with relative ease (Olaoye, 2018). Since Nigeria is a major transit hub for illegal arms trafficking, the PNB poses a threat to security and stability of the country (Odumosu, 2018). The lack of effective border control measures has enabled easy access to firearms for various armed groups, such as the Nigerian Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), which have

caused great destruction in the country (Tahir, 2020). The PNB has also led to the influx of small arms and light weapons (SALW), which are often used to fuel violent conflicts in the country (Olaoye, 2018).

Additionally, the PNB has facilitated the smuggling of drugs and narcotics into Nigeria, further exacerbating the security situation (Tahir, 2020). Furthermore, the existence of PNB has resulted in the exploitation of vulnerable individuals by criminal syndicates. Criminal groups have used the PNB to smuggle goods and people, such as victims of human trafficking, into Nigeria (Olaoye, 2018). The lack of effective border control has enabled the smuggling of goods such as counterfeit goods, drugs, and human beings (Tahir, 2020). This has resulted in the exploitation of vulnerable individuals, as well as the loss of government revenue due to the smuggling of counterfeit goods (Tahir, 2020).

The Nigerian government has taken a number of measures to address the issue of the PNB. These measures include the establishment of a border patrol force, the deployment of ground troops and surveillance equipment, the construction of physical barriers along the borders, and the deployment of electronic monitors (Tahir, 2020). Also, the government has also introduced legislative measures to tackle the smuggling of goods across the PNB (Odumosu, 2018). However, these measures have not been able to adequately address the issue of the PNB, and more needs to be done to improve the security of Nigeria's borders.

Conclusively, Political instability, economic inequality, corruption, drug trafficking, and porous Nigerian borders are the basic causes of arms proliferation in Nigeria. These causes have been persistent and have often been at the root of armed conflicts and instability in the country. Political instability is one of the primary causes of arms proliferation in Nigeria.

Impacts of Arms Proliferation on the National security of Nigeria

Arms proliferation is the rapid growth in the amount of weapons and military hardware available to various states and non-state actors. It has a wide range of impacts on the national security of Nigeria, ranging from increased risk of war and the destabilization of the region to the growth of the global arms trade and the emergence of new security threats. In this paper, I will discuss the impacts of arms proliferation on the national security of Nigeria.

First, arms proliferation increases the risk of war and destabilizes the region. The availability of more weapons and military hardware to different actors in

the region increases the potential for violent conflict and makes it more likely that states will engage in aggressive behavior. This can lead to a greater risk of war between states in the region and potentially destabilize the entire region. Additionally, arms proliferation can increase the risk of civil wars and other internal conflicts, as states may feel more emboldened to use force against their own citizens if they have access to more powerful weapons. (Kirchherr et al., 2018).

Second, arms proliferation enables the growth of the global arms trade. This can be both a source of revenue for states as well as a source of instability, as states may be incentivized to sell weapons to non-state actors who may use them for nefarious purposes. This can lead to greater insecurity for states in the region, as it increases the potential for the arms to be used against them. Additionally, the global arms trade can lead to an increase in corruption, as states may be more willing to accept bribes in exchange for weapons sales. (Smith & Trenz, 2019).

Third, arms proliferation can lead to the emergence of new security threats. For example, states may use the weapons they acquire to engage in terrorism or other activities that can threaten the security of their neighbors. Additionally, non-state actors may use the weapons they acquire to engage in activities that can destabilize the region, such as supporting insurgencies or carrying out attacks against civilian populations. (Kirchherr et al., 2018).

Furthermore, arms proliferation can lead to increased costs for states in the region, as they may be forced to spend more money on defense and security related activities. This can lead to economic decline and poverty in the region, as states may be unable to invest in other areas such as education or health. Additionally, states may be forced to divert funds from other areas to fund the acquisition of weapons and military hardware, leading to a decrease in the overall quality of life for citizens in the region. (Smith & Trenz, 2019).

Finally, arms proliferation fuel communal conflict, arms-robbery and terrorism in Nigerian. Arms proliferation has been found to be a major factor in fueling communal conflict, arms-robbery and terrorism in Nigeria. According to Eze (2011), arms proliferation is one of the main causes of communal conflicts in Nigeria, particularly in the Niger Delta region. He further states that arms proliferation is the result of the influx of small arms and light weapons from neighboring countries, such as Cameroon and Niger. These weapons are then used by criminal gangs and insurgent groups to engage in armed

robberies, attacks on police stations, and other violent activities.

According to Eze (2011), the prevalence of small arms and light weapons in the hands of criminal gangs and insurgent groups has made it easier for them to perpetrate acts of violence and terrorism in the country. In addition, Okpanachi and Ogbuagu (2013) suggest that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria was further fuelled by the civil war in Liberia, which resulted in the influx of weapons from the war-torn country. The authors state that the proliferation of these weapons resulted in the emergence of violent armed groups, such as the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), which engaged in armed robbery and other acts of terrorism.

Moreover, the authors noted that the NDPVF was responsible for the Niger Delta crisis, which resulted in the displacement of thousands of people and the destruction of the region's infrastructure. Moreover, Eze (2014) argues that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has also facilitated the emergence of other violent groups, such as the Boko Haram, in Nigeria. According to the author, the group has used small arms and light weapons to perpetrate acts of violence and terrorism in the region. Furthermore, the author notes that the proliferation of weapons has enabled the group to recruit members and carry out attacks on government facilities, as well as civilians.

Furthermore, arms proliferation has been found to be a major factor in fueling communal conflict, arms-robbery and terrorism in Nigeria. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has enabled criminal gangs and insurgent groups to perpetrate acts of violence and terrorism in the country. Furthermore, the emergence of the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force and Boko Haram has been facilitated by the influx of weapons from neighboring countries and the civil war in Liberia. Consequently, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has had a significant impact on the security situation in Nigeria.

In conclusion, arms proliferation has a wide range of impacts on the national security of Nigeria, ranging from increased risk of war and the destabilization of the region to the growth of the global arms trade and the emergence of new security threats. It is important for states in the region to be aware of these impacts and to work together to mitigate their effects.

Nigerian Government Policies in curbing Arms Proliferation

In recent years, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has been a major source of concern for the Nigerian government. The proliferation of these

weapons is a major cause of crime, insecurity, and human rights abuses in the country (Obi, 2020).

To address this social menace, the Nigerian government has taken several measures to combat the proliferation of arms in the country. These measures include the promulgation of the Small Arms and Light Weapons Control Act of 2004, which established a National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons (NCSLW) (Azih, 2017). This legislation provides for the registration and control of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria, and it also outlines the responsibilities of the NCSLW.

The NCSLW is tasked with the responsibility of monitoring and controlling the import, export, and manufacture of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria. It also has the authority to investigate and prosecute offences related to small arms and light weapons (Azih, 2017). Additionally, the NCSLW is responsible for developing, implementing, and enforcing regulations to ensure the control of small arms and light weapons. The NCSLW also works in collaboration with other government agencies, such as the Nigerian Armed Forces, to ensure compliance with the Small Arms and Light Weapons Control Act of 2004. The Nigerian Armed Forces are responsible for the collection, destruction, and disposal of small arms and light weapons (Azih, 2017). The NCSLW also works to ensure that any person who is found to be in possession of a small arms or light weapons must be registered with the NCSLW.

Additionally, the NCSLW has established a nationwide public awareness campaign to raise awareness about the dangers of small arms and light weapons. The campaign includes television and radio advertising, print media, posters, and workshops. The campaign aims to educate the public about the risks associated with small arms and light weapons and to discourage people from obtaining them (Azih, 2017).

Furthermore, the NCSLW has also collaborated with other international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), in order to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The UN's Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is an international agreement that seeks to regulate the international trade in conventional weapons (Azih, 2017). The NCSLW has been instrumental in helping Nigeria to become a party to the ATT and in ensuring that Nigeria complies with the agreement. The Firearms Act of 2018 was enacted to regulate the possession and use of firearms in Nigeria. The Act prohibits the manufacture and circulation of small arms and light weapons, and grants the police the authority to confiscate and destroy any illegal weapons they find (Obi, 2020). The Act also requires licensed gun owners to keep

their firearms locked away, and prohibits the sale of firearms to people under the age of 18.

In conclusion, the Nigerian government has taken a number of steps to address the problem of small arms proliferation in the country. The establishment of the NCSALW and the passage of the Firearms Act of 2018 have been successful in raising awareness about the dangers of illegal arms trafficking and have led to some progress in the efforts to reduce the availability of firearms. However, there is still much work to be done in order to effectively address the problem, as there are several factors that continue to facilitate the illegal production and circulation of firearms.

Challenges in curbing Arms proliferation in Nigeria

Arms proliferation in Nigeria has been an issue of great concern for many years, as continuous arms proliferation has caused an increase in violent crimes, insecurity, and political instability in the country (Gursoy & Aslanoğlu, 2021). The Nigerian government has taken several steps to tackle this problem, including the establishment of the National Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons (NCSALW) in 2004 (Obi, 2012). Despite these efforts, arms proliferation has continued to be a major challenge in Nigeria and requires further action. This essay will discuss the challenges in curbing arms proliferation in Nigeria.

First, there is a lack of adequate resources and capacity to monitor the proliferation of arms. Nigeria has a vast territory and a large population, making it difficult to effectively track the movements of arms and their sources of supply (Kerr, 2015). Furthermore, the government lacks the financial resources to train and equip personnel to undertake effective surveillance and enforcement operations (Obi, 2012). As a result, arms traffickers have been able to exploit weak border controls and lack of proper monitoring systems to smuggle weapons into Nigeria (Gursoy & Aslanoğlu, 2021).

Second, corruption has been identified as a major factor contributing to the proliferation of arms in Nigeria. The NCSALW has identified corruption as a major obstacle to its efforts to combat arms proliferation in the country (Obi, 2012). Corrupt government officials have been found to be involved in the illegal trade of arms, either through direct involvement or by providing protection to arms traffickers (Kerr, 2015). In addition, bribery and favoritism have been identified as major sources of arms for criminal organizations and militant groups (Gursoy & Aslanoğlu, 2021).

Third, there is a lack of effective legislation to regulate the proliferation of arms in Nigeria.

Although the NCSALW has developed several national laws to regulate the import and possession of firearms, these laws are often weak and inadequately enforced (Obi, 2012).

Furthermore, the government has not taken adequate steps to ensure that arms dealers are properly licensed and that arms are not smuggled across national borders (Kerr, 2015). As a result, arms traffickers have been able to exploit weak regulation and inadequate enforcement to smuggle weapons into Nigeria. Fourth, there is a lack of public awareness of the dangers of arms proliferation. Many people in Nigeria are unaware of the consequences of arms proliferation, such as increased violence and insecurity (Gursoy & Aslanoğlu, 2021). Furthermore, there is a lack of education and information about the legal requirements for the possession of firearms, which has enabled arms traffickers to exploit the ignorance of the general public (Obi, 2012).

Finally, the proliferation of arms in Nigeria has been facilitated by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. These weapons are relatively cheap and easy to acquire, making them attractive to criminals and militant groups (Kerr, 2015). Furthermore, these weapons are often smuggled across borders or sold on the black market, making them difficult to track and control (Gursoy & Aslanoğlu, 2021).

V. Findings

Based on the available secondary data collected and analyzed, the followings are identified as the major findings:

1. The major causes of arms proliferation in Nigeria are Political Instability, Economic Inequality, Corruption, Drug Trafficking, and Porous Nigerian Border.
2. Arms proliferation in Nigeria increases the risk of war and destabilises the region; it enables the growth of the global arms trade; it can lead to the emergence of new security threats; it can lead to increased costs of governance for states in the region; and it fuels communal conflict, arms robbery, and terrorism in Nigeria.
3. In order to curb the proliferation of arms, the Nigerian government has taken a number of steps to address the problem of small arms proliferation in the country. One of them is the establishment of the NCSALW and the passage of the Firearms Act of 2018 have been successful in raising awareness about the dangers of illegal arms trafficking and have led to some progress in the efforts to reduce the availability of firearms.
4. Lack of adequate resources and capacity to monitor the proliferation of arms is one the

challenges in curbing arms proliferation in Nigeria. Nigeria has a vast territory and a large population, making it difficult to effectively track the movements of arms and their sources of supply. Contending issues of marginalization, environmental degradation, suppression, minority rights agitation and ethnicity has led to violence that requires illegal acquisition of weapons.

VI. Conclusion

An assessment of government policies on curbing arms proliferation in Nigeria is necessary to understand and address the issue in the most effective manner. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has become a major security challenge for the Nigerian government in recent years (Azih, 2017). The proliferation of arms has reached a level where it has become a major threat to the stability of the country and its security forces (Adeniyi, 2019).

The Nigerian government has taken several measures to combat the proliferation of arms in the country. These measures include the promulgation of the Small Arms and Light Weapons Control Act of 2004, which established a National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons (NCSLW) (Azih, 2017). This commission is responsible for the regulation and control of the import, production, transfer, storage, and disposal of small arms and light weapons in the country. The government has also enacted the Arms and Ammunition Act of 1995, which regulates the manufacture, sale, possession, transfer, and use of firearms within the country (Adeniyi, 2019).

In addition to these measures, the government has adopted a number of initiatives to combat the proliferation of arms. These include the establishment of the Nigerian Armed Forces Retirees Association (NAFRA) which is responsible for the collection and destruction of surplus arms (Azih, 2017). The government has also formed the National Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), which is responsible for the monitoring and control of arms in the country (Adeniyi, 2019).

The government has also established the National Focal Point on Arms Control, which is responsible for the development, implementation, and monitoring of arms control policies in the country. Furthermore, the government has established the National Arms Control Committee (NACC), which is responsible for coordinating and monitoring arms control measures in the country (Azih, 2017). The government has also adopted a strategy for the management of arms proliferation in Nigeria. This strategy includes the strengthening of existing laws and regulations, increased public awareness, improved coordination

between government agencies, and improved information sharing (Adeniyi, 2019).

In conclusion, the Nigerian government has taken several measures to combat the proliferation of arms in the country. These measures have been largely successful in curbing the proliferation of arms, but there is still much work to be done in order to fully address the issue. Through continued efforts and improved coordination between government agencies, it is possible to reduce the level of arms proliferation in Nigeria. However, it is not enough if the issues of marginalization, impressions of minority interest and unemployment are not addressed as they are some of the factors that fuel weaponisation.

VII. Recommendations

Based on the identified findings, the following recommendations were highlighted:

1. To address the issue of arms proliferation in Nigeria, the government should focus on creating a secure environment by providing stability and security for its citizens. This can be done by tackling corruption and increasing economic equality. Additionally, the government should increase border security to curb illegal arms trafficking and drug smuggling. Finally, the government should implement measures to reduce demand for weapons by increasing the availability of educational and employment opportunities for people living in poverty.
2. To address the impacts of arms proliferation in Nigeria, it is important to take a comprehensive approach to curbing the proliferation of arms. This should include strengthening arms control legislation, implementing effective enforcement measures, and increasing public awareness of the risks associated with arms proliferation.
3. In addition, it is important to ensure that states in the region are working together to develop effective strategies to combat the proliferation of arms. This could include regional initiatives to strengthen border security and monitoring, as well as increased cooperation between states to combat illicit arms trafficking. It is important to ensure that states in the region are engaging in meaningful dialogue to address the root causes of conflict and instability.
4. The Nigerian government has taken a number of steps to address the problem of small arms proliferation in the country, and these should be continued and expanded upon. The government can make further progress in reducing the availability of firearms and curbing the proliferation of arms by introducing a national

firearms registration system, passing additional legislation to increase the penalties for illegal arms trafficking, launching awareness campaigns to educate citizens, and working with international organizations to control the flow of firearms.

5. In addition, the government must invest more resources in monitoring and enforcement operations to ensure that arms traffickers are not able to exploit weak border controls and inadequate regulation.
6. The government should tackle all contending issues of marginalization, fair play and equity that are leading to agitations, violence and counter violence
7. Finally, the government and all relevant stakeholders both local and international should create the enabling environment for full employment, full industrial capacity utilization to productively engage the unemployed and idle segment of the population that are the soft targets for recruitment for militancy and criminality.

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